

**Great Lakes and Environment, Rep. Rebekah Warren, Chair
and
Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, Sen. Patricia Birkholz, Chair**

Senate Bills 388 and 389 and House Bills 4677 and 4678

Dear House-Senate Committee Members:

As a representative of the Michigan Horse Council, we support the elimination of the motor vehicle permit for Michigan residents to Michigan State Parks and Michigan boating access sites and better fund the state park system through an addition of an optional \$10 fee each year when renewing Michigan vehicle registration on non-commercial vehicles.

This support comes from trails organizations, adopt a park friends groups, riding clubs, breeders and individual members that are interested in keeping our recreation abilities and access to our natural resources. The proposed legislation, if enacted, will provide a sustainable source of income for the MDNR to support our state parks systems. This support is not just for the equestrian trails that we use, but the camping facilities (both equestrian and non-equestrian), the hiking trails, the biking trails and the water access. Many equestrians are also multi users and have a very diverse interest in the sports or hobbies that we pursue.

To put this in perspective, a recent study on “The Economic Impact of the Michigan Equine Industry” [joint effort by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station and Michigan State University – MSU Extension] showed that Michigan is home to more than 155,000 horses, mules and donkeys. This industry generates more than \$1 billion a year for the state’s economy. Part of this economy is the use of Michigan’s Parks and Trail systems. Maintaining and improving the trail systems in Michigan is vital to keep interest not only for our residents but to encourage riders from out of state to visit our parks and experience our beautiful trails.

Equestrians are unique in that even when the economy is down, people will sacrifice many things so they can keep and ride their horses. If fuel prices get too high, they don’t have to travel very far to find camping and trail riding. Having access to so many State Recreation Areas and trails is a rare gift for the residents of Michigan.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our views on this matter and would be pleased to address any questions or comments regarding equestrian use of Michigan’s beautiful natural resources.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael R. Foote

**President,
Michigan Horse Council**